

talking points

the criteria and calculations for absolute ratings and improvement ratings (school districts)

These talking points provide general information on how the Absolute and Improvement Ratings are calculated for school districts. To obtain more technical and specific information on school and district ratings, refer to the Annual Accountability Manual available on the SC Education Oversight Committee Web site at www.sceoc.org.

- South Carolina's education accountability system centers around one fundamental belief: **ALL children can achieve.**
- The system uses academic achievement standards to push schools and students toward higher performance and focuses on improving teaching and learning so students are equipped with a strong academic foundation.
- Every student is held to the same high standards, and every school and district is accountable for each of its students.
- The system is designed to evaluate annually the progress of each school and school district.
- The 2010 goal states, "South Carolina's student achievement will be ranked in the top half of states nationally. To achieve this goal, we must become one of the five fastest improving systems in the country." The goal is used to establish expectations.
- Continuous improvement is the key to meeting South Carolina's 2010 achievement goal. The ratings system is constructed to increase in rigor over time. The target for individual student performance established by the State Board of Education is a score of Proficient. A score

of Proficient means the student has met expectations and is well-prepared for work at the next grade level.

Basic Information

- Each school district receives two performance ratings and notification of AYP:

Absolute Rating – based on the level of performance of all schools in the district on measures of student success during the school year on which the report card is based.

Improvement Rating – based on the progress of all schools in the district toward attaining and/or maintaining higher levels of performance on measures of student success from year to year.

Five terms are used in the ratings to describe the level of a district's performance:

Excellent – District performance substantially exceeds the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.

Good – District performance exceeds the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.

Average – District performance meets the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.

Below Average – District is in jeopardy of not meeting the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.

Unsatisfactory – District performance fails to meet the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.

What criteria are used to calculate ratings for school districts?

- PACT assessment performance for schools enrolling students in grades 3 - 8, 4-year graduation rate, HSAP 1st attempt passage rate, and end-of-course test results for high schools (grades 9 - 12).

Which students are included in school district ratings?

- The students whose data are used in the school district Absolute Ratings are based on the following table:
- Inclusion of students with disabilities in the absolute performance of the district is accomplished in the following manner:

Rating Measure	Students
PACT & PACT-Alt, Grades 3-8	Enrolled in district by 45th day and on first day of testing of year for which Absolute Rating is calculated.
HSAP First Attempt	Enrolled in district during school year for which Absolute Rating is calculated; this includes students enrolled in junior high schools or other school organizations which include grade 9 and in which students are tested with HSAP in addition to students enrolled in high school. Also includes students tested with HSAP-Alternate assessment.
Four-Year Graduation Rate	Enrolled in grade 9 first time four years prior to year graduation rate calculated (e.g., expected senior year) (includes data from summer following current school year.)
End of Course Test Results	Enrolled in district during school year for which Absolute Rating is calculated (includes data from summer following current school year.)

- Students with accommodated administrations will be treated identically to students taking other assessments in their standard form in absolute school and district ratings.
 - Students taking alternate assessments will be included in the calculation of the ratings only at the district level.
 - Students taking modified assessments, including off-level assessments, will be factored into the Absolute and Improvement Ratings according to the test score earned.
 - The percentage of students taking PACT assessments on grade level and off grade level is to be published on the district report card and shown in comparison to the percentage statewide.
- English Language Learners (students with limited English proficiency) are tested in accordance with federal guidelines. Students excused from testing by federal rules are excluded from the number of students eligible for testing.

How are Absolute Ratings calculated for school districts?

- Ratings are calculated using a mathematical formula that results in an index.
- The index is calculated using the following procedures:

Step 1 – Calculate an index using PACT performance of district students in grades 3 through 8 using the same mathematical formula for calculating an Absolute Rating for schools enrolling students in grades 3- 8. Students who should be tested but are not tested will be assigned a weight of zero in the accountability ratings.

Note: Since the performance rating categories Below Basic I and Below Basic II are not available from the PACT-Alt results, the following weights for the calculation of absolute and improvement indexes should be used:

weights for calculation of indexes using PACT-alt data only

PACT-Alt Score	Point Weight
Below Basic	1.5
Basic	3
Proficient	4
Advanced	5

Step 2 – Assign points to criteria for district high school student performance based on the criteria below.

high school components of school district ratings for 2005-2006 and beyond

Criterion	Points Assigned				
	5	4	3	2	1
First-attempt HSAP Passage Rate	92.9% or more	83.1–92.8%	63.7–83.0%	53.9–63.6%	Below 53.9%
End of Course Test Results (% of all test scores with score of 70 or above.)	77.2% or more	65.6–77.1%	42.4–65.5%	30.8–42.3%	Below 30.8%
4- year Graduation Rate	93.6% or more	85.2–93.5%	68.2–85.1%	59.7–68.1%	Below 59.7%

Step 3 – Calculate the district index points for each component based on the data weights listed in the table below.

weights for components of district ratings

District Rating Component	Weight for Calculating Rating
Elementary and Middle School Component	
PACT Assessments, Grades 3-8	60%
High School Components	
Four-year Graduation Rate	30%
HSAP First Attempt Passage Rate	5%
End of Course Test Results	5%
Total	100%

Step 4 – Sum the weighted index points awarded to each component in the district index. Round the sum to the nearest tenth. This is the district index, which determines the district's Absolute Rating as follows:

Range of Indices Corresponding to Absolute Rating					
Year	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Unsatisfactory
2005	3.6 and above	3.2-3.5	2.8-3.1	2.4-2.7	Below 2.4
2006	3.7 and above	3.3 – 3.6	2.9 – 3.2	2.5 – 2.8	Below 2.5
2007	3.8 and above	3.4 – 3.7	3.0 – 3.3	2.6 – 2.9	Below 2.6
2008	3.9 and above	3.5 – 3.8	3.1 – 3.4	2.7 – 3.0	Below 2.7
2009	4.0 and above	3.6 – 3.9	3.2 – 3.5	2.8 – 3.1	Below 2.8
2010	4.1 and above	3.7 – 4.0	3.3 – 3.6	2.9 – 3.2	Below 2.9

Step 5 – For school districts with Excellent or Good Absolute Rating indices, determine if Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the category, “all students” has been met.

The index (step 4) determines the school district's Absolute Rating; however school districts with an Absolute Rating of Excellent or Good will decrease one rating category if they have not met AYP for the category, “all students.” For example, if a school district had an index of 3.7 in 2006 but did not make AYP for the category, “all students”, its rating would be lowered from Excellent to Good. Or if a school district in 2006 had an index of 3.5 but did not make AYP for the category, “all students”, its rating would be lowered from Good to Average.

here is a sample calculation of an absolute rating for a school district:

Sample Calculation of an Absolute Rating for a School District in 2006

School Level	Measure	Performance Level	Points Assigned		Weight		Weighted Index Points
Elementary/Middle	PACT Grades 3-8	2.92	2.92	x	0.60	=	1.752
High School	HSAP 1st Attempt	79.4%	3	x	0.05	=	0.150
	End of Course Tests	70.2%	4	x	0.05	=	0.200
	4-year Graduation Rate	81.3%	3	x	0.30	=	0.900
District Index							3.002

District index rounded to the nearest tenth of a percentage 3.0

Absolute Rating: Average

Note: This school district's index of 3.0 earns an Average Absolute Rating through the year 2007. From 2008 through 2010, an index of 3.0 is Below Average.

Additional Step if Absolute Rating is Excellent or Good:

Did the district meet AYP for the category "all students?" Yes/No.

If the district's Absolute Rating is Excellent or Good but the district did not meet AYP for the category, "all students," the Absolute Rating would be lowered by one level—from Excellent to Good or from Good to Average.

How are Improvement Ratings calculated for school districts?

■ The improvement ratings are calculated using a mathematical formula that results in an index.

Step 1 – For the students who qualify for inclusion, calculate an index for the current year and the prior year. The indexes should be calculated by using the same criteria and formula for calculating the improvement ratings for students in grades 3 – 8 and for high school students.

Step 2 – Subtract the district index for the prior year from the index for the current year and round the result to the nearest tenth. The difference is the improvement index, which corresponds to a resulting Improvement rating.

Improvement Performance Rating Criteria

Rating	Improvement Index
Excellent	0.4 or greater
Good	0.3
Average	0.1 – 0.2
Below Average	0.0
Unsatisfactory	-0.1 or less

Adjustments to the Improvement Rating:

- A school district's Improvement Rating is adjusted upwards one rating level, for example from Average to Good or from Good to Excellent, if it has experienced exceptional achievement gains among students belonging to demographic groups which have historically underachieved in South Carolina schools (HUGS). This adjustment to the Improvement Rating is intended to recognize and reward schools which are effectively reducing the achievement gap.
- HUGS are specific groups of students who historically have not achieved as well as the majority student group. HUGS include African-American students, Hispanic students, Native American students, students participating in the free or reduced price federal lunch program and students with non-speech disabilities.
- The gain for the identified groups must exceed the state two-year average improvement index by at least one standard deviation. If a school district accomplishes this achievement, a notice is printed on the front page of its report card immediately below the Improvement Rating.

Improvement Ratings for school districts sustaining high achievement are established as follows:

School districts maintaining an Excellent Absolute Rating for two consecutive years receive a Good Improvement Rating, and if the school district's Improvement Index for all students is a positive number (e.g., greater than zero), the school district's Improvement Rating will be elevated to Excellent. School districts achieving an Absolute Index of 4.8 or higher for two consecutive years will be awarded an Excellent Improvement Rating.

A Note About AYP

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – As required by the United States Department of Education through passage of the No Child Left Behind legislation, a notice about the school's status of adequate yearly progress is provided. AYP specifies statewide targets for all students in each student subgroup: racial/ethnic, economic, disability, limited English proficiency, and migrant status.

For specific questions about AYP, please contact the State Department of Education at www.myschools.com